

I CLAIM:

1. An automatic valve assembly for a water cooler having a reservoir of the type that has its upper end generally sealed to the atmosphere by a water bottle adapter that receives and supports an inverted water bottle, the valve assembly comprising:

(i) a ventilation passageway providing a means for air to enter said reservoir; and,

(ii) an actuator arm hingedly mounted within the interior of said water cooler and operable to move between an open and a closed position in response to changing water levels within said reservoir, when in said open position said actuator arm allowing the unrestricted passage of air into said reservoir through said ventilation passageway and when in said closed position said actuator arm restricting the flow of air and fluids through said ventilation passageway.

2. The device as claimed in claim 1 wherein said actuator arm includes at least one float such that as the water level within said reservoir rises said float causes said actuator arm to rotate about said hinge and move from said open to said closed position.

3. The device as claimed in claim 1 wherein said actuator arm is comprised of a sealed and generally hollow body that generally floats upon the surface of water stored in said reservoir.
- 5 4. The device as claimed in claim 1 wherein said actuator arm is an enclosed polygon formed from a generally hollow, plastic, molded body.
5. The device as claimed in claim 2 wherein said actuator arm comprises a generally circular floating ring.
- 10 6. The device as claimed in claim 1 wherein said actuator arm includes a sealing element moveable in response to movement of said actuator arm, when said actuator arm is in said open position said sealing element permitting air to flow through said ventilation passageway into said reservoir and when said actuator
- 15 arm is in said closed position said sealing element preventing the passage of air and fluids through said ventilation passageway.
7. The device as claimed in claim 6 wherein said ventilation passageway is a conduit extending through said water adapter having a lower end terminating
- 20 within said reservoir.

8. The device as claimed in claim 7 wherein said sealing element is comprised of a resilient compressible material that is driven into contact with said lower end of said conduit upon the movement of said actuator arm with a rise in the water level within said reservoir beyond a predetermined level such that a further rise in the water level within said reservoir causes said sealing element to be compressed about said lower end of said conduit to further prevent the passage of air or fluids therethrough.
9. The device as claimed in claim 8 wherein said lower end of said conduit is tapered having a lower terminal surface of reduced cross-sectional area, said sealing element contacting said lower terminal surface upon said actuator arm moving to said closed position.
10. The device as claimed in claim 9 wherein said lower end of said conduit is comprised of a resilient compressible material that is at least partially compressed upon said actuator arm moving to said closed position.
11. The device as claimed in claim 8 wherein said lower end of said conduit is comprised of a resilient compressible material that is at least partially compressed upon said actuator arm moving to said closed position.

12. The device as claimed in claim 1 wherein said ventilation passageway includes a filter to help prevent the ingress of dirt and debris into said reservoir as air is drawn through said ventilation passageway.
- 5 13. The device as claimed in claim 1 wherein said ventilation passageway is a conduit extending through said water adapter and having a lower end terminating within said reservoir.
- 10 14. The device as claimed in claim 13 wherein said lower end of said conduit is comprised of a resilient compressible material, said resilient compressible material at least partially compressed by said actuator arm upon said actuator arm moving to said closed position.
- 15 15. The device as claimed in claim 13 wherein said lower end of said conduit is tapered and has a lower terminal surface of reduced cross-sectional area.
- 20 16. The device as claimed in claim 15 wherein said lower end of said conduit is comprised of a resilient compressible material, said resilient compressible material at least partially compressed by said actuator arm upon said actuator arm moving to said closed position.

17. An automatic valve assembly for a water cooler reservoir, the valve assembly comprising:
- (i) a ventilation passageway providing a means for air to enter said reservoir, said ventilation passageway comprising a conduit having a lower end terminating within said reservoir;
 - (ii) an actuator arm hingedly mounted within said reservoir, said actuator arm comprising a float that is operable to move between an open and a closed position in response to changing water levels within said reservoir; and,
 - (iii) a sealing element positioned upon said actuator arm adjacent said lower end of said conduit such that when said actuator arm is in said open position said sealing element is withdrawn from said lower end of said conduit, when said actuator arm is in said closed position said sealing element is driven into contact with said lower end of said conduit and restricts the flow of air and fluids through said ventilation passageway.
18. The device as claimed in claim 17 wherein said lower end of said conduit is tapered and has a lower terminal surface of reduced cross-sectional area.
19. The device as claimed in claim 18 wherein said lower end of said conduit is comprised of a resilient compressible material, said resilient compressible

material at least partially compressed by said actuator arm upon said actuator arm moving to said closed position.

20. An automatic valve assembly for a water cooler having a reservoir of the type
5 that has its upper end generally sealed to the atmosphere by a water bottle adapter that receives and supports an inverted water bottle, the valve assembly comprising:
- (i) an actuator arm positioned within said reservoir and hingedly mounted to said water bottle adapter, said actuator arm comprising a float that is
10 operable to move between an open and a closed position in response to changing water levels within said reservoir; and,
- (ii) a ventilation passageway providing a means for air to enter said reservoir, said ventilation passageway comprising a conduit having a lower end terminating within said reservoir, said lower end of said
15 conduit comprised of a resilient compressible material that is at least partially compressed by said actuator arm upon said actuator arm moving to said closed position to thereby restrict the flow of air and fluids through said ventilation passageway.
- 20 21. The device as claimed in claim 20 wherein said lower end of said conduit is tapered and has a lower terminal surface of reduced cross-sectional area.